



September-December 2021 £4.75

get MESSY!

**Messy Church
Goes Wild!**

**Messy
Masterclasses**

**Messy
memories**



**Messy Church
and discipleship**

**Includes
Messy Church
at home
ideas**

Sessions in this issue

**Trusting is
believing**
Mark 10:46-52

Alone and scared
1 Kings 17

Sew miraculous!
Acts 9:36-43

**The birth of
Jesus**
Luke 2

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Session material

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What do the different parts of the session mean?

Messy health check: As part of your team planning, share thoughts and feedback about your Messy Church and congregation.

Messy team theme: With your team, choose one or two key messages to focus on.

How does this session help people grow in Christ? Is everything theme-connected and helping all ages to be more like Jesus?

Mealttime card: Reflective questions to consider during mealttime conversations.

Take-home idea: Continue family activity/exploration between sessions.

Question to start and end the session: Use on social media/posters/flyers too.

Social action: Link the theme with additional activities, charities and events or explore international issues.



Go to messychurch.org.uk/getmessyse21 to download all templates at A4 size, including a session planning sheet.



If you are using these sessions for a Messy Church at home, look out for this symbol! These are activities that can easily be adapted to the home.

In our next issue

JANUARY Parable of the lost coins

FEBRUARY Justice for all

MARCH Celebrating small

APRIL The greatest love story ever told



Lucy Moore writes...

The present of the present



I've been pondering on making the most of the here and now, of the present of the present. It's been miserable being in such a long pandemic situation – and for many people it's been more tragic than merely miserable. It's been a privilege to help assemble the stories of the beautiful Messy Church leaders who have moved on to their seats at the great, Messy table waiting for them just out of our sight (page 14). They are deeply missed, but we rejoice in the gift of their presence in our network and the privilege of sharing our time on this planet with them.

It has been tough, very tough, and we're not out of the woods yet. But here we are, at the turn of the seasons, placed here and now for the here and now in a here and now that is unique. No time has been quite like this. And God has chosen YOU to be the people to deal wisely with this opportunity! The verse echoing round BRF over the past year has been: 'And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?' (Esther 4:14, NIV). There is no getting away from the fact that, in God's eyes, YOU are as good as it gets for the here and now. YOU are like Esther – vulnerable, perhaps; feeling inadequate, perhaps; pant-wettingly scared, perhaps – but nonetheless the right person in the right place at the right time for whatever God wants to do next.

You are the right person in the right place at the right time for whatever God wants to do next.

It's a moment of transition. A watershed. A short season when the choices we make right now in September, October, November and December 2021 will shape the next season of kingdom-growing in the countries we live in. We've had an unprecedented chance to let go of the unhelpful aspects of the past and we've been given space to consider what we really want for the future. Will that be backward-looking? A nostalgia for everything to be as it was?

Or an excitement about the present and future, now that space has been cleared for change to happen? Will we dive straight back into the old ways?

Or will we demand of our church councils that we *don't* unthinkingly restart everything that was there before? What could we leave buried in lockdown in order to invest more in what will liberate more people into the freedom of a life with Jesus? (If you don't, who will?)

One of the uncomfortable challenges that's been whispered around Messy Church for years, and which has been reiterated in the *Voyage of Discovery* report about deepening discipleship in Messy Churches, is the challenge to *let go of something* in order to have more time and energy to invest in your Messy Church, so that people have even more opportunity to become lifelong followers of Jesus. Once we restart all the old and beloved groups, habits and practices in our inherited churches, our time will fill up quickly, unless we deliberately claim the time for what we really long to do and be (or should that be for what

God really longs for us to do and be?).

At the very least, it's a chance to talk as a team about what your Messy Church is actually for and to shape your ministry from now on around those aims. If we can't do it here and now, we're never going to do it: this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

So my challenge to you and to myself is to take some time in the next few weeks to continue your conversation

with God, or to start one, asking the Holy Spirit to shine a light on anything you need to lay down and to warm your heart around what you need to take up for the sake of Jesus and of those who don't yet know him. It sounds weird to say it in the context of this magazine, but if that means laying down Messy Church, that's what you should do. If it's laying down something else equally loved, have the courage to do that – for such a time as this.



Session material: September 2021



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Bible story

Mark 10:46–52 (CEB)

Jesus and his followers came into Jericho. As Jesus was leaving Jericho, together with his disciples and a sizable crowd, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, Timaeus' son, was sitting beside the road. When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was there, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, show me mercy!' Many scolded him, telling him to be quiet, but he shouted even louder, 'Son of David, show me mercy!'

Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him forward.'

They called the blind man, 'Be encouraged! Get up! He's calling you.'

Throwing his coat to the side, he jumped up and came to Jesus.

Jesus asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?'

The blind man said, 'Teacher, I want to see.'

Jesus said, 'Go, your faith has healed you.' At once he was able to see, and he began to follow Jesus on the way.

Pointers

The story of Bartimaeus on the surface appears to be a story of physical blindness and healing, but a deeper look reveals it to be a story of persistence, compassion for those on the fringes and new beginnings.

- Bartimaeus is an alternative disciple. He teaches the twelve disciples about faith.
- Bartimaeus was persistent. He asked more than once for what he wanted and what he needed. He was not deterred by the people shushing him. He was not afraid to seek something he needed.
- This is an example of Jesus having compassion and mercy for those who are considered 'less than'. He treated Bartimaeus, whom other people despised, with respect.
- Jesus teaches us to see the world with new eyes – to see and feel the world differently.

#discipleship: team

Messy health check

If nobody in your Messy Church seems to be desperate to get closer to Jesus, could you pray for some 'shouting'?

Messy team theme

- What amazing thing has happened when you have had faith in God?
- Have you ever been afraid to seek something you needed?
- Have you had encounters on your spiritual journey that have helped you see or feel differently about something?

How does this session help people grow in Christ?

In life we often beg and plead – having doubts that God will hear us or respond to our needs. All God asks of us is to trust. When we have faith in God, as Bartimaeus did, we are made whole. This session provides an opportunity to explore a fresh start, seeing the world anew, when we truly trust God.

#discipleship: families

Mealtime card

- Who are the people that teach you about faith?
- How do we help or hinder people from moving towards Christ?
- What does it mean to see something with new eyes?

Take-home idea

Who are the people in your community who are shushed? Say a prayer for them and end it with, 'Lord, in your mercy, hear my prayer.'

Question to start and end the session

So... what do you want Jesus to do for you?

#discipleship: extra

Collect used eyeglasses and send them to the nearest Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center.

Social action

Find a local organisation that advocates for those moving from homelessness to being placed in a home and give a 'shout out' on social media to bring awareness to their cause.

Alone and scared by Martyn Payne

things seem to go wrong. It's important that we offer our Messy Church families a rounded picture of the life of faith. Yes, there are answered prayers, moments of intimacy with God and miraculous transformations, but there is also the everyday routine of staying faithful when things don't work out quickly, plans get changed and there are long periods of just waiting for the next thing God has for us. Elijah's story, which in this chapter covers a three-year period in his life, raises all these important issues. God's work in our lives may have its highlights, but in the end it's the long haul that matters.

#discipleship: families

Mealtime card

- Can you tell everyone about a time when you were scared and how you got through it?
- Have you ever had to receive help from someone you didn't know?
- Have you ever experienced God's special help when you were in need?

Take-home idea

In the story, the ravens were sent to look after Elijah when he was in hiding. However, it's usually people who look after birds when water and food are scarce. As a way to remember the story, set up a bird-feeding station in your garden, or on your balcony, with water and seeds. There are ideas for bird feeders online. Keep a record of what birds come to your feeding station. Just as you care for the birds, God cares for your family.

Question to start and end the session

So... how does God help us when we get scared?

#discipleship: extra

Elijah showed great courage in speaking out against the ungodly regime of King Ahab. He was also clearly a man of prayer. Christians today are called, as part of their discipleship, to stand up for what is right, call out injustice and pray about the big issues of our world, not just for our own needs.

As a Messy Church family, or individually in your homes, spend some time looking through the newspapers or news online together and identifying key issues about which you as a family can pray. As you pray, ask God what you might be able to do to be brave and make a difference for good with God in this world, as Elijah did.

Social action

Elijah was very grateful for God's provision when he was in hiding from King Ahab. Sadly, there are many people on the run today from unjust regimes and dangerous situations in other countries. Can your household – or you could do this with another household – find out about any refugee projects that exist in your area? Can you investigate ways in which you can help? For example, raising money or collecting furniture or food for those in need, just as Elijah was looked after by the widow's family in his need.

Activities

1. Rain stick

You will need: cardboard tubes; aluminium foil; decorative paper; scissors; masking tape; pasta and/or rice; sticky decorative ribbon and felt-tip pens

Scrunch the foil into a long snake and twist it helter-skelter style. Put this inside your cardboard tube. Seal one end of the tube with masking tape. Pour in the pasta/rice. Seal the other end with tape. Decorate your rain stick with colourful paper or felt-tip pens. As you tip your rain stick, hear the rain fall, but then stop the rain by holding the tube horizontally.

Talk about how Elijah had told King Ahab that the rain would stop for three years. Talk about what bravery that took and what faith Elijah had in God's words.

1



Session material: November 2021

4. Tapestry prayer station

You will need: a loom made of some chicken wire attached to an old picture frame, or string wound tightly around a frame; strips of material of different colours, including black; printout of 'My life is but a weaving', a poem attributed to Corrie ten Boom, or another poem

Read the poem, then weave some material into the group tapestry. Think and pray about how you can trust God with the highs and lows of life, as only he can see the big picture.

Talk about how life is a tapestry of colours, bright and dark. We don't always know why the dark threads are needed, but God does. At the end of our lives, we will understand too.

5. T-shirt apron

You will need: lots of large old T-shirts; sewing scissors

Cut off the sleeves. Leaving the collar intact, cut off the top half of the back of the T-shirt. Then, leaving a 5 cm strip across the back, cut off the bottom half of the back of the T-shirt. Cut the 5 cm strip in half lengthways, leaving one end attached on the right and one end attached on the left. These will be your apron ties. Pull them tight to make them more string-like.

Talk about how Tabitha made clothes for the poor. She may well have made new clothes out of old, just like you are doing. This is a great way to help the planet by reducing waste.

6. Skilful cookies

You will need: butter; sugar; eggs; dried fruit (dates, apricots, sultanas, etc.); desiccated coconut; chocolate chips; oats; plain flour; vanilla extract; mixing bowls; wooden spoons; measuring spoons; baking trays lined with baking paper; an oven; paper gift bags (optional)

Cream a 3 cm x 3 cm cube of butter, 1 tbsp sugar and a few drops of vanilla essence. Add ½ beaten egg and beat together until light and fluffy. Add 1 cup of the fruit, chocolate and coconut and 1 cup of oats, then 1 tbsp flour. Mix using your hands and form into balls. Flatten and place on a lined baking tray (write names on baking paper next to the biscuits). Cook for 20 minutes at 180°C. Place in paper gift bags if possible.

Talk about how Tabitha's skill was sewing and she used that to help others. What is your skill? Is it cooking? Who could you cheer up by giving these biscuits to?



7. Washing games

You will need: pegs; a scoreboard; a washing line; clothes

How many pegs can you hold in one hand without dropping them? How fast can you peg out all the washing? Prizes per age group.

3



4



5



The birth of Jesus by Mark and Jane Hird-Rutter

Reporter Our news team is at the inn in Bethlehem. First, we have here Jonathan, the innkeeper. Would you please tell us what happened yesterday?

Jonathan Well, we are really busy because of the census. All our courtyards and private rooms are completely full. This young couple showed up. They had been all over town and could not find any other place to stay. She was pregnant, very pregnant, and she looked very tired. We have a stable in the back. It's more like a cave where we keep our animals. It's dry and relatively clean and much less crowded than our courtyard. We thought they would do better there.

Reporter Next we have Marian, the innkeeper's wife. What did you see?

Marian Well, I saw the young woman – she was very young and very close to giving birth. I've had experience delivering babies, so I went to see how she was doing. When I got there she was in labour. Her husband was doing his best, but I could see him saying a 'Thank you' prayer when I arrived. The mum was wonderful. She was very young but had an amazing air about her. The birth went without complications – a little boy. Once they were settled, I took a look at the three of them. The word that comes to mind to describe them was 'Grace'. We wrapped the little one in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger. A very sweet boy.

Reporter I've been able to get into the stable. The young couple, Mary and Joseph, have consented to answer some questions, as long as we talk in a whisper, so we don't wake the baby. Now Mary and Joseph, congratulations on the birth of your baby. Have you chosen a name yet?

Joseph We have decided to call him Jesus.

Reporter Mary, how did you come to be in the centre of all this excitement? I can see you're pondering the question before answering!

Mary An angel came to me and asked me if I would be the mother of this child. This was completely unexpected; I didn't know what to do. I sat still for a while and thought of all that this would mean to me. I quietly prayed to God and asked, 'How can I do this? Will you help me, God?' When I had done this, I found I felt a great peace and warmth and I realised that this was my path. I always try to think carefully and consider things before I act. You don't always have all the answers, but often you get a feeling, especially after praying, that it's the right thing to do.

Reporter This has been a very exciting day in the town of Bethlehem. As the day progressed, more visitors from far away arrived. With me now I have Balthazar from Arabia. How did you and your friends find your way to this stable?

Balthazar My friends and I are all scholars from far away. We all study the stars in the sky. Have you seen the very bright one?

Reporter Why yes, it's hard to miss. You can even see it in the daytime.

Balthazar Indeed, you can. My friends and I have been studying this 'star' for some time. We could see for months that it was happening and the place that it was happening is in the constellation of the Lion, 'the King'. We knew that Bethlehem was the city of King David, so we came here. We could calculate the time when the star would stop in the sky and so we planned to arrive as close to that time as we could.

Reporter How did you know all this?

Balthazar We watch the sky very carefully and we have instruments to measure. We are called astronomers, that's what we do.

Reporter You brought presents with you.

Balthazar Yes, we brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gifts for the King of the Jews.

Reporter An amazing day in the little town of Bethlehem. This is [Reporter's name] with *The Bethlehem Herald*, signing off. 'Peace on earth to all people!'

Prayer

Creator God, we ask that this story, the amazing birth of Jesus, will bring us all closer to understanding the wonderful gift of your Son Jesus and all that he means and stands for. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with us. Amen

Song suggestions

'Huron carol' – Jean de Brébeuf

'The virgin Mary had a baby boy' – traditional

'Hark the herald angels sing' – traditional

'Jesus name above all names' – Naida Hearn

Meal suggestion

Curried turkey and broccoli bake (page 30 of the *Alpha Cookbook*), with tossed salad and dressing, and buns for dessert.